

Elm CofE Primary School

Main Road, Elm, Wisbech, PE14 0AG

Inspection dates 20–21 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher provides very effective leadership. She has inspired staff and, together, they have improved teaching and achievement since the previous inspection.
- Achievement is good and pupils in all year groups now make faster progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching is good because teachers are enthusiastic and have good subject knowledge. Pupils find their lessons interesting and this helps them to make good progress.
- Subject leaders are skilled at checking how well pupils are doing and supporting teachers to develop their teaching skills. This has improved teaching, especially in mathematics.
- Children in Early Years Foundation Stage are quick to develop early reading and writing skills.
- Pupils behave well and feel safe in school. They work hard in lessons and want to do well.
- The curriculum is carefully planned and pupils enjoy a wide range of visits to support their learning. This contributes to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Governors provide good support and challenge to the headteacher and check the quality of teaching, pupils' achievement and the use of financial resources.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough pupils make better than expected progress in their learning because the work is sometimes too easy for more-able pupils.
- Teachers' marking does not always help pupils to make their work better.
- Teaching assistants do not always provide good support for learning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in all classes. They saw 14 lessons, five of which were jointly observed with the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read in Year 1 and Year 6, and observed the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make).
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, subject leaders, a group of pupils, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors, and a representative from the local authority.
- The 10 responses to the online Parent View survey were considered, together with 26 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' books as well as looking at pupils' work and displays in all classrooms.
- A number of documents were examined, including the school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses, school improvement plans, records of meetings of the governing body, safeguarding files, data on pupils' current progress, and information on the management of teachers' performance and the monitoring of teaching.

Inspection team

Emily Simpson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Lynn Lowery

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller-than-average-sized primary school.
- The proportions of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action, and at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, are broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which in this school provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is broadly average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There have been a number of staff changes since the previous inspection. In addition, there has been a new Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body.
- The school runs a nursery which operates on the same site. The nursery is registered and inspected separately.
- The school operates a breakfast club.
- The school works in informal partnership with Elm Road Community Primary School. For example, the two schools jointly employ a 'Reading Recovery' teacher.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching so more pupils exceed expected progress by:
 - increasing the level of challenge in lessons, especially for more-able pupils
 - making sure that teaching assistants support learning effectively
 - improving marking so pupils consistently know how to improve their work, and ensuring that they act on the advice they are given.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children start in the Reception class with skills below those typically found for their age. Teachers make accurate assessments of what children know and can do, and use them well to plan and provide activities to help them make good progress, especially in reading and writing. They develop as confident and curious learners and are well prepared to enter Year 1.
- Pupils continue to progress well in Key Stage 1 and attain levels in line with national expectations in reading, writing and mathematics. School data and work in pupils' books shows this improvement is continuing for pupils currently in Years 1 and 2.
- The 2013 Year 6 test results were in line with national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. This was an improvement when compared to 2012 results. Information about how well pupils currently in Year 6 are doing shows they are on track to attain higher results this year in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Progress though Key Stage 2 has increased since the previous inspection and more pupils make expected progress than is found nationally. In the past, not enough pupils have exceeded expected progress, especially in mathematics.
- School information about how well pupils are learning shows they are making faster progress this year, especially in mathematics. This is because the school has changed its approach to teaching mathematics and teachers focus on teaching the weaker areas of mathematical knowledge and understanding identified from careful checking of pupils' test answers.
- Pupils supported by pupil premium funding make good progress because leaders and managers use the additional funds wisely. Specialist teaching of reading has helped pupils catch up with their classmates where they were previously falling behind. In 2013, in Year 6, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals were on average a term behind their classmates in mathematics and a year behind them in English.
- Pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs also make good progress. Their work is checked frequently by the special educational needs coordinator to check it is at the right level of difficulty. The support given to this group of pupils is changed if they make slow progress.
- Pupils achieve well in phonics and can link letters and sounds to spell words. Each class is invited to choose three new books for their class library every half term; they enjoy selecting and reading the books, and are developing a greater love of reading.
- Work in pupils' books shows they make very good progress in their writing because they all enjoy the challenging activities provided, especially the more-able pupils. The same level of challenge is not always seen in mathematics and this sometimes restricts more-able pupils from attaining higher levels.

The quality of teaching is good

- Inspection evidence, considered alongside the school's monitoring of teaching and learning and the views of pupils, parents and staff, shows that teaching has improved since the previous inspection.

- Teachers plan lessons which keep pupils interested and help them to learn well. Teachers plan creative and exciting starts to new topics to enthuse pupils. This was seen when pupils tended frog spawn as an introduction to their unit about life-cycles. Pupils enjoyed the activity and it supported their learning in a range of subjects, including writing and science.
- Teachers are very committed to improving their practice and benefit from attending frequent training courses. They also have many opportunities to observe other teachers, including in other schools. This has helped improve teaching to be good.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge which helps make explanations very clear when new ideas are introduced in lessons. This was seen in a Year 1 mathematics lesson, where pupils were calculating how to give change from an amount of money. Pupils were excited to quickly learn a new skill because their teacher had explained it so clearly to them. They were therefore delighted when they, and their friends, could demonstrate and explain their new skills and understanding.
- In lessons, pupils are eager to learn. They have good relationships with their teachers and listen carefully to what they are told.
- In most lessons, teaching assistants provide good support to pupils who need additional help, especially when pupils are working individually or in small groups, but this is not consistent across the school. Teaching assistants are sometimes not used effectively when teachers are explaining new ideas to the class.
- Mathematics teaching is improving and pupils have regular opportunities to use their knowledge and understanding to solve mathematical problems. This was seen in Year 5, where careful planning and skilled use of questioning by the teacher enabled all groups of pupils to successfully tackle a complicated investigation and therefore make good progress in using and applying their mathematical skills.
- Writing is taught well in all year groups, especially in Year 6, and most teachers mark pupils' extended writing books in detail and show them exactly how to improve. Such detailed marking is not used in mathematics. Pupils rarely respond to their teachers' helpful comments to make their work better.
- In some lessons, teachers set work that is too easy for more-able pupils. This means they finish their work quickly and are not always given an extra task to challenge their thinking. As a result these pupils do not always learn as much as they are capable of.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils joyfully sing 'We are proud of our school' as they join in their weekly celebration assembly. This pride is evident in their positive conduct around school.
- Pupils settle to their work very quickly in lessons and try hard to do well. The presentation of work in their books, including their handwriting, is improving. Pupils' positive attitudes to learning have helped to improve their achievement.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. It ensures that all statutory requirements relating to safeguarding are met.

- There is a caring atmosphere around school and pupils are confident that adults will help them if there is a problem. Pupils say they feel safe and secure in school and parents agree with them.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including when they are out and about and when using the internet.
- Pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying. They report that incidents of bullying are rare and are quickly dealt with. Their views are supported by the school's own records of bullying incidents.
- In the past, attendance has been low. The school has successfully worked with families and external specialists to improve it, and attendance this year has risen to average. Pupils are punctual arriving at school each day. Attendance and punctuality have both improved following the introduction of the school's breakfast club.

The leadership and management are good

- All leaders and managers work effectively together to evaluate how well the school is doing. They have a very accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development, and use this information to write clear plans to bring about further improvement.
- Leadership of mathematics has improved considerably since the previous inspection. The subject leader conducts frequent lesson observations which focus on features of good mathematics teaching. This information is used to provide training for teachers on any areas of weakness. This approach has been very successful in improving teachers' subject knowledge and, as a result, pupils are making faster progress in mathematics.
- The headteacher actively seeks partnerships with other schools to help improve pupils' achievement. This includes joint employment of some staff and shared school trips.
- The local authority has provided good support and knows the school very well because it has provided the same adviser for three years. It shares the view that the headteacher has driven considerable improvements since the last inspection and the school is now good.
- The headteacher and subject leaders make very good use of information about how well pupils are doing. This is checked carefully with work in pupils' books and lesson observations to make sure it is accurate and to set clear targets for teachers. These targets clearly show the expectation of how well pupils should achieve in reading, writing and mathematics and are checked every term. This systematic monitoring of teachers' performance has helped raise expectations and improve teaching and achievement to good levels.
- Information about how well pupils are doing is used well to provide additional help for pupils at risk of falling behind in their learning or those who need additional support. The progress of these groups is carefully checked by the special educational needs coordinator, who works closely with outside specialists such as therapists to provide good support.
- The curriculum offers pupils a wide range of experiences to support their learning, including trips and visitors. During the inspection, pupils in Year 3 experienced a Victorian day to support their history topic. Pupils love these experiences, and in most classes they are used well to develop pupils' extended writing skills.

- Additional sports funding is used to employ specialist physical education teachers to lead one lesson each week. These lessons are observed by class teachers, who subsequently lead a follow-up session. Pupils report that they now love their physical education lessons and enjoy more opportunities to be involved in competitive sport.
- Leaders and managers make good use of additional funding such as the pupil premium to ensure that all pupils have the same chance to be successful in school.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body provides strong challenge and support to the headteacher. The governors are very knowledgeable about the quality of teaching and the strengths and areas for development in pupils' achievement. They use the *Data Dashboard* (information on the Ofsted website) to compare school data to national data to help bring about improvements. They have successfully held leaders to account over pupils' progress in mathematics.
- Policies are reviewed frequently and governors have made sure that the pay policy can be used to reward teachers whose pupils make consistently good or better progress.
- Governors are frequent visitors to the school and use their visits to check a variety of elements of its work, including the impact of pupil premium spending and the quality of pupils' engagement. They have assessed pupils' participation in school sport to evaluate the use of the primary sports funding, and the impact of the breakfast club on pupils' attitudes and attendance.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	110800
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	430730

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	208
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Neil Buttress
Headteacher	Fiona McCallum
Date of previous school inspection	14 May 2012
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